

CHAPTER IV

ROBERT GARDNER

Robert Gardner Sr. was born in Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland, March 12, 1781. He operated a mill and a farm and owned a tavern at Kilsyth, Stirlingshire, Scotland, where a son, Robert Jr., was born October 24, 1819. Conditions were hard at that time for which the people blamed the government and so there were occasional riots. Various radical meetings were held in Gardner's tavern and though he took no part in these meetings he was arrested and put in jail by the English troops. Some of the leaders of the rebellious movement were executed but as no one came to testify against Mr. Gardner he was released.

Robert Gardner was so angry at this treatment that in 1822 he went to America to prepare a home for his family, taking his oldest son, William, and a daughter, Mary. The mother, Janet, Archibald, and the son, Robert remained at home expecting to follow the next Spring. As no report came to discourage the mother she sold her property the next Spring and sailed with the children for America.

While she had no clue as to where her husband had settled, they perhaps thought of America as being something of the size of Scotland; so sailed forth bravely for the vast, little known continent of America to find her husband, knowing he had settled somewhere on it.

The little group were five weeks and three days on board ship and finally arrived at Prescott above Montreal, Canada, where to their great relief, was their father. Having heard that the wives of twenty-five Scotchmen had followed their husbands, who had left as he had done, traveled seventy-five miles on foot to meet his family whom he vaguely hoped might be among them. This meeting was a time of rejoicing that they always remembered. The family walked back the entire distance to their new home in the woods of Canada. The mother carried young Robert who was only two and a half years old; while William and his father carried Archibald, who was nine, much of the way. Mary, who was about fourteen years old had stayed in the lonely cabin in the woods to guard the house and when she saw them coming, ran out with her little dog to meet them. But her eyes filled with tears of joy at this blessed return and she ran back to the house unable to speak.

With the building of the homes, clearing of the giant trees and the thistles, the drainage of the swamps, and the planting and the harvesting of the crops, all without teams, occupying so much of their time, young Robert had only six weeks of formal schooling. He later became wise through experience however, and he and other members of the family grew prosperous in Canada though it was a hard country in which to make a living. They had good farms, good homes, good teams and lumber and flour mills. This is the early background of Robert Gardner in America.